Need Life With a Radio 'Ham' Be a Lonely One for Spouse?

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NEED life with a radio "ham" be a bone of contention for others in the family? How can it be made tolerable for those who are not dedicated hams? Is it a waste for a man or boy? Need it bring loneliness to the wife or mother? Read these letters:

Mrs. Griggs: I can understand the feelings of the wife and mother who signed her letter "Ham Bone." Neither my husband nor myself are radio inclined. My husband has regretted that he could not share more of the actual interest with our son, but we have tried to make up for it by exhibiting genuine interest in whatever our boy does. We have encouraged him in his amateur radio activities, even to turning over part of our basement for a ham shack.

We have listened excitedly for far away contacts, enjoyed the cards of acknowledgment as they came through the mail, provided snacks occasionally for the stream of hams who tracked down the back stairs to the shack. All of them have acted like pretty clean cut fellows, I must say.

Our son got some equipment through trades and some second hand. Sometimes he has repaired equipment and resold or traded so that he could cover some of the expense of his hobby. This was a satisfaction to him, and is a factor in a boy's development which can not be replaced by having "store bought" equipment. The skill and ingenuity my son developed throughout his high school days eventually gained him a job in the field of his choice, at a time when teen agers and young adults were in such oversupply in industry that many college people were looking for jobs fruitlessly.

The Advantages

Besides the advantage of close father-son relations which can be so important as the teens are reached, and the advantage of gaining a useful skill for later life, we saw this hobby as an excellent constructive time filler. We never had to worry as to where the boy was and what he was doing.

We knew he wasn't out joy riding, because he was right down there in his shack, experimenting and putting together some things that worked and others that didn't, but most of which taught him something of value. So I plead with "Ham Bone" to reconsider her attitude toward hams.

I also plead with her husband to become more considerate of total family good. Numerous midnight hours and overbalance on amateur radio just as overbalance in music or other indoor activities, can ruin your son's and your own physical health. In our space age this is clearly immaturity. It is no longer thought to be clever to disregard one's physical health any more than it is thought to be smart to accomplish below the level of one's ability.

You, the father, with a skillful interest to share with your son, are also responsible for showing the boy how to direct this interest maturely and sanely for his best all-around development. One thing is sure: A balance between healthful, outdoor sport and muscular development and radio or so-called indoor or intellectual development is going to make a better boy and man out of him. Have you considered, also that boys need sport with boys of their own age, as well as interests shared with the father?

The plan some of our California friends arrived at is a good starting point. By agreement this husband usually spends time during the week in his radio shack, and weekends belong to the family for out of door activities together. On rare occasions, again by mutual agreement, a weekend radio event may be decided on in exchange for some weekday evening event for the family.

Maturity is the difference between a boy and a man, but an adult in years may be immature if he spends needed family money on equipment for radio, power tools or fishing rods. Whatever amount a husband spends on equipment for personal interest, it's good sense to put aside a like amount in the wife's account for the things she wants, possibly household appliances. All this, after food, clothing and other real necessities.

Wife's Attitude

If a man shows consideration of family time, the wife isn't likely to resent his hobby, and she may become interested enough to "learn the lingo" as has been suggested. If a husband is smart enough to be a ham of any consequence, he is smart enough to see that going 50-50 on the question of hobbies is good sense. He should consider: What are my wife's interests? What am I doing to culti- some activity she enjoys?

MOTHER WHO ONCE FELT LIKE "HAM BONE."

Mother Who Once Felt Like Ham "Bone": You have presented some worthy points.

I. Q. G.

Mrs. Griggs: This is for "Ham Bone." My husband has been a ham since 1937 when he was just out of high school. He is one who built most of his equipment. What he didn't build he saved for. We were married in 1944 when we both were in our mid-twenties. At first I looked on amateur radio as a rival for his love.

As years passed I discovered this was foolish and childish. I now thank God for my husband's hobby. I know where he is in his off time. I realize it eases his mind after a hard day's work, and it has been indirectly responsible for the good job he now has.

During our years of marriage he has never neglected his family. We come first. But the hobby is there for his leisure time.

A wife, too, can have a hobby or interest that causes her to neglect the family if she isn't careful. Hobbies and any personal interests must be used intelligently and in moderation.

My husband objects to a certain new type of ham who buys all of his eqiupment, then when something goes wrong can't even fix it. He says a ham like this misses so much that he could be learning. I have a son, 11, whom I hope and pray will become interested in radio work and use it as intelligently as his father has. It can save a lot of worries when he is a teen ager.

I don't share the radio hobby to the extent my husband does, but I listen now and then as I did recently when friends moved to Florida. We were able to contact another ham there and talk to these friends via a phone patch. Believe me I was the most excited member of the family. I want my husband to pursue his hobby all his life.

A HAM'S WIFE.

A Ham's Wife: Thank you for your letter. I. Q. G.